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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 8 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statements of the President of Georgia, Prime Minister of Georgia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the decision to hold a referendum in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, on 9 April 2017.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 32, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kaha **Imnadze**
Permanent Representative

17-02102 (E) 150217

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Annex to the identical letters dated 8 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the President of Georgia on the holding of a so-called plebiscite and presidential elections in the Tskhinvali region on 9 April

The plebiscite, election or any other action that envisages the free expression of the will of citizens cannot be implemented in the territory occupied by the foreign State where the majority of the indigenous population was expelled from as a result of ethnic cleansing and where the only force exercising effective control today is the Russian Federation.

Any attempt to change the name of the occupied region, without the consent of the central Government of Georgia, represents yet another action against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia directed towards the further annexation of Georgia's occupied territories.

We again call upon the Russian Federation to take real steps towards the deoccupation of Georgia's occupied territories and the implementation of its international obligations.

We appeal to the international community to stand up to the violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and any attempt to legitimize the outcomes of so-called elections and a plebiscite.

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the decision to hold a referendum in the Tskhinvali region

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia condemns the decision of the Russian occupation regime to hold a referendum on changing the name of the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, on 9 April 2017.

The Russian occupation forces intend to name one of the oldest regions of Georgia as "the republic of South Ossetia — the state of Alania", similar to the Republic of North Ossetia — Alania, in order to lay the groundwork for the illegal annexation of the occupied region. As early as 2008, after the military intervention in the Georgian territory, the Russian Federation recognized the so-called independence of the Tskhinvali region, in violation of the fundamental norms of international law, whereupon it pursues the factual annexation of the occupied territory. By naming Georgia's occupied region after the subject of the Russian Federation, Moscow is starting to use its remaining instruments against Georgian statehood.

Holding a referendum in the occupied territories of Georgia, while the ethnic Georgian population has fled as a result of ethnic cleansing and the occupying Power fully controls the situation on the ground, is illegal and cannot have any legal effect, irrespective of the outcomes. This is yet another act of aggression by the Russian Federation, fully neglecting the fundamental principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of a sovereign State and is aimed at undermining the established international order.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community to demonstrate a consistent and firm stance towards the illegal actions of the Russian Federation, take the appropriate measures to avoid the escalation of the situation in the Tskhinvali region and to prevent another fact of illegal annexation in Europe.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also calls upon the Russian Federation to cease its provocative policy towards Georgia, respect the fundamental principles of international law and to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Georgia in accordance with the commitments under the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008.

Statement of the Prime Minister of Georgia on the holding of a referendum in the Tskhinvali region

In response to Georgia's peaceful policy and efforts seeking reconciliation and confidence-building between the populations divided by the occupation lines, the Russian Federation, unfortunately, continues to take steps towards the increased isolation and annexation of Georgia's occupied territories.

This is evidenced by the recent decision to hold a referendum on naming the Tskhinvali region similar to a subject of the Russian Federation, which once again exposes the true intentions of the occupying Power to incorporate Georgia's integral regions.

According to international law, it is unlawful and unacceptable to hold a referendum in a region from which tens of thousands of residents have been expelled as a result of ethnic cleansing and where effective control is exercised by the occupying Power.

I urge the international community to join forces and stand up to the Russian Federation's provocative actions in order to prevent violations of the territorial integrity of sovereign States and the imposition of the practice of unlawful annexation, which undermine the region's stability and the international system stemming from democratic values.